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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
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INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 002186

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SUBJECT: PRT/HELMAND: HELMAND GOVERNOR DAUD VOICES
CONCERNS ABOUT SECURITY

REF: KABUL 1746

Classified By: DEPUTY POL COUNSELOR MARY TOWNSWICK FOR REASONS
1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: At a weekly security meeting on April 17, Helmand Governor Mohammed Daud told PRT officials that the security situation in the province was becoming more critical. In late April, the Governor moved poppy eradication forces to the northern districts, not only to eradicate, but also as a show of force. Local police had deserted their posts and were actively helping farmers harvest opium poppy in exchange for cash or a share of the crop. The Ministry of Interior sent 200 replacement Highway Police to Nimroz and Helmand provinces because the current force was engaged in setting up illegal roadblocks in order to extort "taxes" from citizens. Although anticipated (reftel), the growing violence has unnerved provincial officials. Governor Daud's concerns, while genuine, may also have been amplified by the need to compete for scarce Afghan security resources. The security response plan subsequently assembled by Coalition and Afghan security forces, and approved by President Karzai, along with the growing presence of British, Canadian and Dutch forces as NATO/ISAF deployments increase in the South, will begin to address some of these concerns. END SUMMARY.

SITUATION DETERIORATING

12. (C) Governor Daud's mid-April perspectives on security

in Helmand were bleak, especially regarding Lashkar Gah, the provincial capital, and the northern districts, where government control remained tenuous at best. Two suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (SVBIED) explosions just outside the PRT did nothing to soothe his security-related anxieties. He noted that, over the past three months, the province had lost about 32 policemen and three district governors to hostile action. He added that rising intensity levels of hostile activity were causing a drop in morale among the people and law enforcement entities.

13. (C) On May 3, Colonel Assadullah, chief of the Lashkar Gah district (Helmand's provincial capital) police, told PRT poloff that the security situation in Lashkar Gah was "very bad and continuing to deteriorate." He noted that more Taliban appear to be entering Lashkar Gah from Pakistan and neighboring provinces. Due to the tense situation in Lashkar Gah and a heightened Coalition security posture, there have been several incidents of UK forces firing warning shots at civilian drivers who approached UK convoys too closely. The PRT has begun an information campaign to mitigate this problem.

ERADICATION REDEPLOYMENT: LIMITED IMPACT

14. (C) In late April, the Governor deployed his eradication forces, noting that the intention was for these forces to eradicate poppy and demonstrate a "show of force." Subsequently, the Provincial Police Chief, Abdul

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Ramen Jan, took a force to Naw Zad district and Deputy Governor Amir Mohammed took a force to the Kajaki area. It appears that little poppy was eradicated in this district; there were some contacts with anti-Coalition forces. The Governor opined that the presence of eradication forces helped improve security in southern Helmand districts such as Dishu and Khanoshin. (COMMENT: This is plausible, but it should be noted that those two districts are sparsely populated. In addition, the Khanoshin district center was attacked on April 17, and the district center was attacked on April 17, and the district police chief and several others were wounded. END COMMENT.)

THIN BLUE LINE

15. (C) The Governor also noted that another security concern was the significant thinning of the police ranks because many policemen deserted their posts to help farmers with the poppy harvest. They receive either cash or a percentage of the harvest. Daud said that the Governor's militia, created to assist with poppy eradication, had dwindled to less than 100 personnel, down from nearly 500, as they were attracted by the high wages available from harvesting opium. (Note: The Governor had sent about 150 of the original 500 militia to Kajaki district to help with security there. End Note.)

PROBLEMS WITH THE HIGHWAY POLICE

16. (C) The Highway police has long had a reputation as being among the most corrupt elements of the law enforcement community. Prior to the Taliban, they were notorious for setting up roadblocks to collect "taxes" from citizens traveling on public roads. The Taliban ended this type of activity, but in Helmand province at least, the practice has again become widespread. The Governor said that many people had brought this issue to his attention, observing that this sort of practice hurts the government's

credibility. Accordingly, he appealed to the Ministry of Interior. The MOI agreed to send 200 new Highway Police officers to replace the incumbents. The new group, of mixed tribal origin, has been deployed to Delaram (Nimroz province near the Helmand border) as well as Shuraf (near the new base west of Gereshk) and Gereshk, all along the Ring Road. According to the province's MOI representative, the previous Highway police in these areas were not registered and have since been dismissed. He added that, from what he has heard from his contacts in the area, the new group is a significant improvement over the last one.

COMMENT

17. (C) There is no doubt that, as anticipated (reftel), the security situation has become more challenging in Helmand due to the onset of warmer weather and the Taliban's ability to reconstitute in sanctuary. Clashes with the Taliban have increased. The Taliban engaged the population more frequently during the spring growing and traditional fighting season by actively

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spreading the word in northern Helmand that they would protect farmers' fields. A contributing factor to increased enemy activity has been that the Afghan and Coalition security forces began operations to combat poppy cultivation and extend government influence to areas where it was previously weak or non-existent. The Afghan Eradication Force, augmented by ANA and ANP forces, ceased their operations in support of governor-led eradication on April 26. (The Afghan Eradication Force, a national force, was reconstituted to perform national-directed eradication in the northern province of Badakhshan and plans to deploy there on May 15.)

EMBASSY COMMENT (CONT'D)

18. (C) The Defense Attachi from Embassy Kabul visited the Kajaki area of Helmand on May 8. He spoke with the security elements deployed in the vicinity of the Kajaki Dam. There are 200 ANA soldiers with their Kandak commander, a U.S. ETT team, a French Special Forces Team and a U.S. security coordinator from a private security company working in close coordination to deny ACM freedom of movement through Sangin District and to protect the critical physical plant of the dam. Although all reported that the dam is not currently threatened, they rendered a consensus opinion that the overall security situation in northern Helmand province was tenuous, attributing the cause to developments associated with the poppy eradication effort.

NEUMANN